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## The Sierra Madre Mountains.

John Muir

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into these grounds, when two years old, are fifteen inches in diameter and forty feet in height.

Dates, pine apples, bananas, and custard apples may be successfully, if not profitably, grown without artificial heat, in glass houses, or in cheaper structures of lath and cotton cloth.

The beauty of the gardens in the San Gabriel Valley, in the blooming season of either bulbous plants or roses, is becoming celebrated. One resident in Pasadena counts in her parterre over one hundred varieties of the queen of flowers. The stately calla masses itself around the water basins into a veritable meadow of lilies. Here the camelia, the gardenia, jasmine, even hoya, and stephanotis bloom profusely out of doors.

Few fences break harshly upon the eye, and the modest, homelike residences are so embowered in drapery of climbing vines that they seem almost of nature's building.

Hedges of the native cypress, Mexican lime, or pomegranate are used to define the streets, and these are as neatly kept as the private grounds. Everywhere lavish Nature invites the hand of man to co-operate with her in the production of beauty.

It was in a climate like this that the Greek cities clustered richly together, and Art was born. It was beside the waters of an untroubled sea, beneath just such cloudless skies, where the myrtle, the orange, the olive, and the vine flourished and were fed by living mountain streams, that a greater than the Greek civilization gave law and order to a barbarous world. Man is largely the result of environment and education, and we are justified in believing that the San Gabriel Valley will be peopled with a community wise enough to lead generous and contented lives, and good enough to labor with one accord for the social, material, and spiritual welfare of the race.



## THE SIERRA MADRE MOUNTAINS.

BY JOHN MUIR.

THE Santa Lucia, San Rafael, San Gabriel, San Jacinto, and San Bernardino Ranges, are almost untouched as yet save by the wild bees. Some idea of their resources, and of the advantages and disadvantages they offer to bee-keepers, may be formed from an excursion that I made into the San Gabriel Range about the beginning of August of "the dry year." This range, containing most of the characteristic features of the other ranges just mentioned, overlooks the Los Angeles

vineyards and orange groves, from the north, and is more rigidly inaccessible, in the ordinary meaning of the word, than any other that I ever attempted to penetrate. The slopes are exceptionally steep and insecure to the foot, and they are covered with thorny bushes from five to ten feet high. With the exception of little spots not visible in general views, the entire surface is covered with them, massed in close hedge growth, sweeping gracefully down into every gorge and hollow, and swelling over every ridge and summit, in

\* [This article is an extract from "The Bee-Pastures of California," in the *Century Magazine* of July, 1882, and is published here by permission of the Century Company and Mr. Muir. The mountains which are called the "San Gabriel Range," both in this article and the one on San Gabriel, are the same as the Sierra Madre Mountains, by which general name the range is more commonly known.—EDITOR.]

shaggy, ungovernable exuberance, offering more honey to the acre, for half the year, than the most crowded clover-field in bloom time. But when beheld from the open San Gabriel Valley, beaten with dry sunshine, all that was seen of the range seemed to wear a forbidding aspect. From base to summit all seemed gray, barren, silent, its glorious chaparral appearing like dry moss creeping over its dull, wrinkled ridges and hollows.

Setting out from Pasadena, a hopeful little colony of orange groves, about six miles from the city of Los Angeles, I reached the foot of the range about sundown; and being weary and heated with my walk across the shadeless plain, concluded to camp for the night. After resting a few moments I began to look about among the flood-boulders of the creek for a smooth camp-ground, when I came upon a strange, dark-looking man who had been chopping cord-wood. He seemed greatly surprised at seeing me, so I sat down with him on the live-oak log he had been cutting, and made haste to give a reason for my appearance in his solitude, explaining that I was anxious to find out something about the mountains and meant to make my way up Eaton Creek next morning. Then he kindly invited me to camp with him, and led me to his little cabin, situated at the foot of the first of the mountain slopes, where a small spring oozes out of a bank overgrown with wild rose bushes. After supper, when the daylight was gone, he explained that he was out of candles, so we sat in the dark, while he gave me a sketch of his life, in a mixture of Spanish and English. He was born in Mexico, his father Irish, his mother Spanish. He had been a miner, rancher, prospector, hunter, etc., rambling always, and wearing his life away in mere waste, but now he was going to settle down. His past life, he said, was of "no account," but the future was promising. He was going to "make money and marry a Spanish woman." People mine here for water as for gold. He had been running a tunnel into a spur of the mountain back of his cabin.

"My prospect is good," he said, "and if I chance to strike a good strong flow, I'll soon be worth five or ten thousand dollars. For that flat out there," referring to a small, irregular patch of bowldery detritus, two or three acres in size, that had been deposited by Eaton Creek during some flood season, "that flat is large enough for a nice orange grove, and the bank behind the cabin will do for a vineyard, and after watering my own trees and vines I will have some left to sell to my neighbors below me down the valley. And then," he continued, "I can keep bees and make money that way, too, for the mountains above here are just full of honey in the summer time, and one of my neighbors down here says that he will let me have a whole lot of hives on shares to start with. You see I've a good thing; I'm all right now." All this prospective affluence in the sunken, boulder-choked flood-bed of a mountain stream! Leaving the bees out of the count, most fortune seekers would as soon think of settling on the summit of Mount Shasta.

About half an hour's walk above the cabin is "The Fall," famous throughout the valley settlements as the finest yet discovered in the range. It is a charming little thing, with a low, sweet voice, singing like a bird as it pours from a notch in a short ledge some thirty-five or forty feet into a round-mirror pool. The face of the cliff back of it and on both sides is smoothly covered and embossed with mosses, against which the white water shines out in showy relief, like a silver instrument in a velvet case. Hither come the San Gabriel lads and lasses to gather ferns and dabble away their hot holidays in the cool water, glad to escape from their commonplace palm gardens and orange groves. The delicate maiden-hair grows on fissured rocks within reach of the spray, while broad-leaved maples and sycamores cast soft, mellow shade over a rich profusion of bee-flowers growing among bowlders in front of the pool—the fall, the flowers, the bees, the ferny rocks and leafy shade forming a charming little poem of

wildness, the last of a series extending down the flowery slopes of San Antonio through the rugged, foam-beaten bosses of the main Eaton Canyon.

From the base of the fall I followed the ridge that forms the western rim of the Eaton basin to the summit of one of the principal peaks, which is about five thousand feet above sea level. Then, turning eastward, I crossed the middle of the basin, forcing a way over its many subordinate ridges and across its eastern rim, having to contend almost everywhere with the floweriest and most impenetrable growth of honey bushes I had ever encountered since first my mountaineering began. Most of the Shasta chaparral is leafy nearly to the ground; here the main stems are naked for three or four feet, and interspiked with dead twigs, forming a stiff *chevaux de frise* through which even the bears make their way with difficulty. I was compelled to creep for miles on all fours, and in following the bear-trails often found tufts of hair on the bushes where they had forced themselves through.

For a hundred feet or so above the fall the ascent was made possible only by tough cushions of club-moss that clung to the rock. Above this the ridge weathers away to a thin knife-blade for a few hundred yards, and thence to the summit of the range it carries a bristly main of chaparral. Here and there small openings occur in rocky places, commanding fine views across the cultivated valley to the ocean. These I found by the tracks were favorite outlooks and resting-places for the wild animals—bears, wolves, foxes, wild-cats, etc.—which abound here, and would have to be taken into account in the establishment of bee ranches. In the deepest thickets I found

wood-rat villages—groups of huts four to six feet high, built of sticks and leaves in rough, tapering piles, like musk-rat cabins. I noticed a good many bees, too, most of them wild. The tame honey-bees seemed languid and wing weary, as if they had come all the way up from the flowerless plain.

After reaching the summit I had time to make only a hasty survey of the basin, now glowing in the sunset gold, before hastening down into one of the tributary canyons in search of water. Emerging from a particularly tedious breadth of chaparral, I found myself free and erect in a beautiful park-like grove of live-oak, the ground planted with aspidiums and brier-roses, while the glossy foliage made a close canopy overhead, leaving the gray dividing trunks bare to show the beauty of their plain, interlacing arches. The bottom of the canyon was dry where I first reached it, but a bunch of scarlet mimulus indicated water at no great distance, and I soon discovered about a bucketful in the hollow of the rock. This, however, was full of dead bees, wasps, beetles, and leaves, well steeped and simmered in the hot sunshine, and would, therefore, require boiling and filtering through fresh charcoal before it could be made available. Tracing the dry channel about a mile further down to its junction with a larger tributary canyon, I at length discovered a lot of boulder pools, clear as crystal, brimming full, and linked together by glistening streamlets just strong enough to sing audibly. Flowers in full bloom adorned their margins, lilies ten feet high, larkspurs, columbines, and luxuriant ferns, leaning and overarching in lavish abundance, while a noble old live-oak spread its rugged arms over all. Here I camped, making my bed on smooth cobble-stones.

